

CM/ECF NEWS

U.S. District Court, Western District of New York

May 2004

Tips and Tricks

Scanning Documents: Scanning is admittedly the most cumbersome and error prone part of the CM/ECF filing process. Scanning results in larger file sizes than documents converted directly to PDF and larger files are more time consuming to upload to and download from the CM/ECF system. In instances where the document is already available in electronic format, scanning should be avoided unless absolutely necessary (for instance, to show signatures on an affidavit, etc.). However, when it is necessary to scan a document:

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Select the lowest dots per inch (dpi) setting that results in a clear and legible document. Most documents are highly legible at 150 dpi; the dpi of many documents can be reduced even further. Scanning documents at 300 dpi typically doubles the file size while displaying minimal, if any, improvement in readability.

Select scanning in black & white for straight text documents and gray scale for documents with tones. Avoid selecting color when scanning unless absolutely necessary. Selecting color for a standard black and white typed document increases the file size tremendously.

Do not use OCR (optical character recognition) when scanning documents to be filed electronically. OCR is used to scan documents for future editing. Documents to be filed should already be in final form and should not require OCR. Be aware that even the best OCR programs only claim to be 95% accurate. Since a typical page contains 300+ words, OCR is likely to introduce

15 or more errors per page. Instead, scan your documents as if you were creating a mere photocopy by not using OCR.

Provide staff with as much training as possible in the use of the scanner and scanning software. Use of scanners and scanning software is relatively new. Most law firm staff are likely to be unfamiliar with the process. Among the comments the Court help desk hears with some frequency from law firm staff is the need for assistance or training in how to scan documents.

Recognize that some documents are impractical to scan and file electronically. While the CM/ECF systems has proven capable of handling multi megabyte documents, most users have limited Internet connection speeds and cannot upload or download those documents in any reasonable length of time. Scanned documents of more than 15 pages are likely to exceed 1.5 megabytes. In contrast, documents that are converted directly from a word processor to PDF can often exceed hundreds of pages before exceeding 1.5 megabytes.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO AOL USERS

When you upgrade to AOL version 9.0, the AOL installation routine may reset your Anti-Spam preferences, which may prevent you from receiving notices of electronic filing and other ECF-related e-mails from the Court. CM/ECF users who use (or plan to upgrade) to AOL 9.0 should **verify that webmaster@nywd.uscourts.gov is listed in your AOL address book**, so that ECF-related e-mails are not blocked from reaching your AOL account.

Also note, however, that you should never send e-mail to webmaster@nywd.uscourts.gov since the Court does not accept e-mail sent to that account.

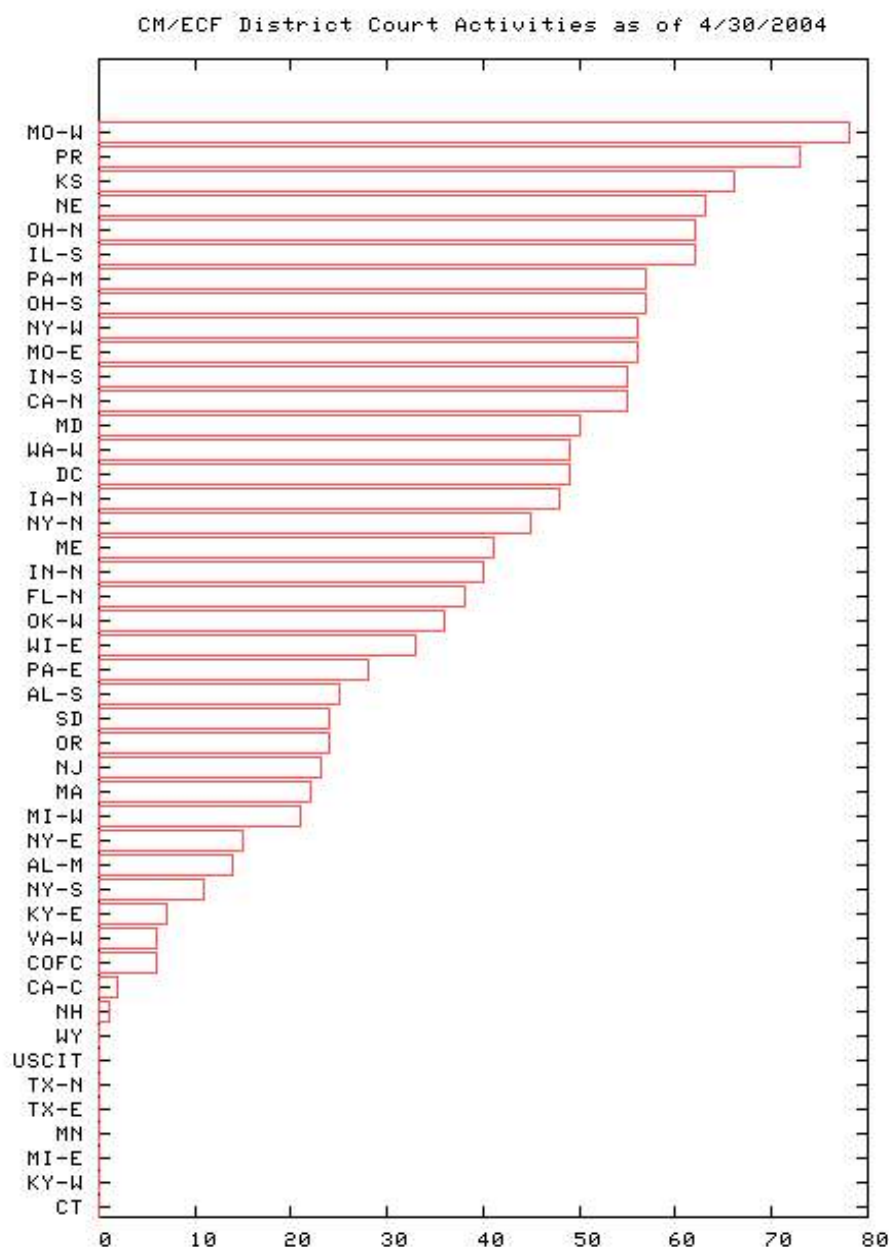
Status of Upgrade to Version 2

The upgrade was installed in our test area in April and is being tested. We had no problems with the installation, and are learning how to use the new features such as enhanced privacy access capabilities and forms. We plan to install Version 2 in the live and training areas sometime in mid- to late-June. Watch the CM/ECF banner page and our web site for announcements, because the installation will require some downtime over a weekend.

We're in the Top Ten!

The April numbers are out, and New York Western is in the top ten for attorney usage in the country. The Administrative Office analyzes the filings in all ECF courts monthly, and calculates how many items that could be filed by attorneys actually are filed by attorneys rather than court staff. Even though we have been allowing e-filing only since January 1, we are way ahead of other courts, some of whom have been on the system much longer. Our percentage of attorney filings is over 56%. Congratulations to all of you, and thank you for your cooperation. Below is a bar chart showing the percentage

of attorney usage in the 46 live ECF district courts.



More Good News

A Bankruptcy Court on the West Coast asked if any courts would like to take some high-speed scanners off their hands. They could no longer use the scanners due to an operating system upgrade. Well, we can use those scanners, and we are getting them for just the cost of packing and shipping. The scanners will be placed in the public areas in the clerk's offices in Buffalo and Rochester, for your convenience. We hope to have them in operation by the end of June.

We Heard You

Very soon we will publish a matrix for your use in determining which of our judges desire courtesy copies on what documents, how to submit stipulations and proposed orders for each judge, and other information specific to each chambers. The matrix will be available on our website for printing or downloading. The Administrative Procedures will be revised to refer you to the matrix for such information.

Also, our website will be redesigned to make it easier for you to find important CM/ECF information.

CM/ECF Contacts:

Jeanne Spampata	716-332-1756
Pat Healy (On-Site Demos)	716-332-1770
Jean Marie McCarthy	716-332-1711
Buffalo Help Desk	716-332-1775
Rochester Help Desk	585-613-4036
Buffalo Training Info (Suzanne)	716-332-1712
Rochester Training Info (Tricia)	585-613-4018

Best Web Sites – Check These Out:

<http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/cmecf/ecffaq.html>

<http://www.iand.uscourts.gov/> (Click on CM/ECF, and then FAQs; some of the specific procedural information may not be applicable to NYWD, but much is)

Considerations When an Attorney Leaves a Firm

When an attorney leaves a firm, both the attorney and the firm need to consider the implications to the CM/ECF noticing system. If cases will move with the attorney, all the attorney needs to do is to change his/her e-mail notification set up and submit a change of address to the Clerk's Office. If cases will remain with the firm, the firm will need to ensure that the Court docket accurately reflects the proper attorney of record and that the new attorney of record is properly set up to receive e-mail notification. Law firms may also wish to consider the best method of handling e-mail addressed to the firm for the departed attorney. Summarily removing the attorney from the firm's e-mail system with no further action, may result in notifications being missed. Firms may wish to consider whether their own e-mail systems should forward such e-mails to the attorney at his/her new address, or to another attorney within the firm. Naturally, these are issues that should be worked out between the departing attorney and the firm and will vary from case to case.

The E-Mail Coach



Unreadable E-mail Notices: If you consistently receive e-mail notices that are unreadable, your e-mail notification setup may be configured improperly for the e-mail system that you use. Some e-mail systems can parse HTML (hypertext markup language) text, which makes for a well formatted e-mail message, and some e-mail systems cannot. CM/ECF can send e-mail to both types of systems, but it needs to be told which type of message to send. You can reconfigure the manner in which notices will be sent to you by logging onto the system, clicking on reports, selecting Set Up E-mail Notification, and in Step #5, switching between:

1. I receive my e-mail through Netscape or an Internet Service Provider, or
2. I receive my e-mail through other means (e.g. cc-Mail)

While those two descriptions are not necessarily self-explanatory, just switch from one to the other and, when your next notice arrives, determine which selection works best for you.

Links within E-mail Messages that Don't Work: Occasionally, attorneys report that they receive e-mail notices, but that they can't link to the underlying document from within their e-mail system. This problem is particularly prevalent for those using e-mail systems that have difficulty parsing HTML code, such as Groupwise. Some firms have reported getting around this problem by saving the e-mail notice to disk, and then opening it from within Netscape. Those firms report that they can link to

the document from the message. Another tactic is to use Netscape and either log into the system or use the Public Query function.

Directing E-mail Notices to Multiple Addresses: Attorneys frequently list multiple e-mail addresses when setting up their e-mail notification preferences so that staff members or clients can also be notified of filings electronically. Care should be taken, however, so that 1) each e-mail address is entered on a separate line, 2) that there are no extraneous characters before or after the e-mail address, and 3) that there are no blank lines between e-mail addresses. Failure to follow these tips will result in messages being misdirected.

Attorney Registration Update

- ▶ Over 1400 now registered.
- ▶ It may take a week to 10 days before you receive your username and password; please plan accordingly. If an emergency comes up while you're waiting, call or fax Jeanne Spampata.
- ▶ Do not change your login name (username); you should, however, change your password as soon as you receive your initial information.
- ▶ We do not save your password in our files. If you lose it, we cannot tell you what it was and will have to assign you a new one.
- ▶ It may take us some time to retrieve your admission date for you; please provide it if at all possible.